

The Lost Rites of the Age of Enlightenment

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In my book *The Genesis of Freemasonry* I proposed how natural philosopher and Freemason Dr Jean Theophilus Desaguliers was responsible for creating the third degree by the mid-1720s. Before this, there were two ‘parts’ being performed; the Entered Apprentice and the Fellow Craft, and we have little evidence of what they were like.¹ However, we do know that these two ‘parts’ were often performed at the same lodge meeting, with evidence from the early minutes of the Old York Lodge indicating how a lodge could be opened in another town especially to admit a large number of candidates, such as in Scarborough in 1705 when a lodge was opened to admit six men into the Fraternity, and in Bradford in 1713, where 18 men were recorded as being admitted.²

Indeed, to further support the fact that there were just two ‘parts’ in Freemasonry at this time, it states in the Ancient Charges displayed in Anderson’s Constitutions of 1723 that ‘*No Brother can be a Warden until he has passed the part of a Fellow Craft*’, indicating that the part of Fellow Craft was the senior ‘grade’ that allowed the Mason to take part in an Office if so desired. In the 1738 edition of the Constitutions, the wording of this particular charge had been changed to ‘*The Wardens are chosen from among the Master Masons*’, suggesting that the third degree of Master Mason had by this time been introduced and the Constitutions had to be updated. By 1730 the publication of Samuel Pritchard’s exposé *Masonry Dissected* revealed the three degree ritual, and it seemed that this new tri-gradal system became very popular indeed.³

The new three degree style ritual soon spread, even being referred to by Dr Francis Drake in his now famous Oration, given on St. John’s Day, the 27th December 1726 in the Merchant Adventurers’ Hall in York, where he stated that ‘*three parts in four of the whole Earth might then be divided into e:p:f:c&m:m.*’⁴ The themes of the third degree deeply explored the search for lost knowledge; the degree portraying the search for the lost word of God that was hidden in the architecture of Solomon’s Temple. With the symbolic death of Hiram Abiff, this knowledge was lost.⁵ It seemed that Freemasons soon wanted to explore deeper pathways within Masonry, leading to new ideas being developed. Chevalier Ramsey was a Jacobite Mason who had gone to France to tutor the sons of aristocrats, and in his Masonic address in 1737, he famously outlined that Freemasonry was linked to the Crusaders and Chivalric Orders. His Oration put forward that after being preserved in the British Isles, it was transported to France, and though there is no evidence that Masonry was associated in any way to the Crusaders or Chivalry, it does show that at this time there was a developing interest

¹ The Edinburgh Register House MS. (1696), supplies an early text for the ceremony of Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft. See also David Harrison, *The Genesis of Freemasonry*, (Hersham: Lewis Masonic, 2009), pp.120-1.

² See David Harrison, *The York Grand Lodge*, (Bury St. Edmunds: Arima Publishing, 2014), p.33. Indeed, multiple candidates are still common in certain Masonic practices in Scotland, especially in the Mark Degree, and it is not uncommon for some Craft lodges in England to admit manageable multiple candidates, the difference today though is that the degrees are performed separately at different lodge meetings.

³ Harrison, *Genesis of Freemasonry*, pp.116-19.

⁴ Anon., *The Ancient Constitutions of the Free and Accepted Masons, with a speech deliver’d at the Grand Lodge at York*, (London: B. Creak, 1731), p.15. See also Harrison, *York Grand Lodge*, p.23.

⁵ See Harrison, *Genesis of Freemasonry*, pp.88-106.

in Chivalric Orders in relation to Freemasonry. Though Ramsey did not set out any plans for new Chivalric Masonic Orders in his 'Oration', his address certainly assisted to inspire them.⁶

In 1733, there appears to have been a 'Scotts Masons Lodge' meeting at the Devil Tavern in London, with a 'Scotch Master' being made in Bath in the south-west of England in 1746.⁷ According to Masonic historian John Belton, the Scots 'degree' seemed to include the discovery in a vault of the long lost word, and Scots Crusaders working with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other, but in the time of Zerubbabel instead of the Crusades.⁸ This 'Scots Masters' theme will be discussed later, as it was an idea that filtered into some of the Rites that occurred on the Continent. Another enigmatic early 'grade' was that of 'Harodim', which was mentioned by Bro. Joseph Laycock in an Oration, published in Newcastle in 1736, the Harodim Workings connected to the old Swalwell Lodge in Durham.⁹ The possible first hints of a mysterious ritual that is reminiscent of our modern day Royal Arch emerged by 1740, though the authenticity of the source itself has been debated; the Rite Ancien de Bouillon gives an early mention of a plate of gold, and refer to a symbol that consisted of a double triangle within a circle and the tetragrammation in the centre.¹⁰ In 1746, the Freemason John Coustos published an account of his torture by the Inquisition, whereby he admitted his Masonic activities and described a part of the ritual which was remarkably similar to the Royal Arch, namely the finding of a tablet of bronze amongst the ruins of the Temple.¹¹ Coustos had been made a Mason in London but had left for Portugal in 1743, where he had continued to be an active Freemason. He was subsequently arrested and tortured, his suffering revealing the fragments of an early secret ritual. Today in the Royal Arch ritual in England, the long lost name of God is discovered on the plate of gold within the ruins of the first Temple, something that was alluded to in Richard Carlile's Royal Arch ritual which was compiled from various sources in the early nineteenth century.

There are further mentions of the Royal Arch at this time; a report in Faulkner's Dublin Journal gives details of a procession on St. John's Day in 1743 at Youghal in Ireland, referring to *'the Royall Arch carried by two Excellent Masons'*. The following year, Dublin based Fifield Dassigny wrote in his *Serious and Impartial Enquiry into the Cause of the Present Decay of Free-Masonry in the Kingdom of Ireland*, of how *'a certain propagator of a false system some few years ago in this city who imposed upon several very worthy men under a pretence of being a Master of the Royal Arch, which he asserted he had brought with him from the city of York...'* Dassigny continues to provide us with a glimpse behind the veil, writing that the Royal Arch was *'an organized body of men who have passed the Chair and given undeniable proofs of their skill'*, adding that some brethren did not like *'such a secret ceremony being kept from*

⁶ David Harrison, *The Transformation of Freemasonry*, (Bury St. Edmunds: Arima Publishing, 2010), p.148.

⁷ Henry Sadler, 'An Unrecorded Grand Lodge', *AQC*, Vol. 18, (1905), pp.69-90, on p.71.

⁸ See John Belton, 'Brother Just One More Degree', *SRJ*, (March/April 2013), pp.7-9, on p.7.

⁹ See John Yarker, *The Arcane Schools*, (Belfast: William Tait, 1909), pp.439-40.

¹⁰ The 'Rite Ancien de Bouillon' has somewhat mysterious origins; George Oliver put forward that it had links to Chevalier Ramsay, possibly from him being on good terms with a noble family who pretended descent from the Crusader Godfrey de Bouillon. See George Oliver, *The Origin of the Royal Arch Order of Masonry*, (London: Bro. Richard Spencer, 1867), p.31. For a discussion on the Rite by Oliver, see Harrison, *Transformation of Freemasonry*, pp.147-151. A sceptical view of the Rite Ancien de Bouillon is put forward by Arturo de Hoyos in 'The Mystery of the Royal Arch Word', *Heredom*, Vol. 2, (1993), pp.7-34.

¹¹ John Coustos had been initiated into Freemasonry in London in 1730, and was a member of Lodge No. 75, held at the Rainbow Coffee House, London. See John Coustos, *The Sufferings of John Coustos for Free-Masonry And For His Refusing to Turn Roman Catholic in the Inquisition at Lisbon*, (London: W. Strahan, 1746), and also see John Coustos: Confession of 21 March 1743, in S. Vatcher, 'John Coustos and the Portuguese Inquisition', *AQC*, Vol. 81, (1968), pp.50-51.

those who had taken the usual degrees'. This seems to imply that the Royal Arch ritual was relatively new and was indeed a further degree to be experienced by certain Masons; a pathway for a select few.¹²

The Craft rituals at this time were far from standardized and this created liberty to explore new stories, to create sequels to the Hiram legend and the building of the Temple. All this was happening during a time when English Freemasonry became split and was arguing over how the Royal Arch should fit into the system. That is not to say that English Freemasons were not interested in further degrees, on the contrary, it was during this fertile period that the Knights Templar was being practiced and, by the later eighteenth century, the Mark Degree was firmly capturing the English Masonic mind. As we shall see later, there were Rites and localised ritualistic pathways that took hold and developed in England. There were three Grand Lodges operating in England during the latter half of the eighteenth century; the Moderns, the Antients and the Grand Lodge of all England held at York, and all three had a different style of administration and a different system of ritual. The Moderns seemed uncomfortable with the Royal Arch, whereas the Antients embraced it as an additional degree. The York Grand Lodge went even further and by the 1770s were practicing five degrees; the three Craft degrees, the Royal Arch as a fourth and the Knights Templar as a fifth. It seemed some Masons wanted more.¹³

Masonic writer Arthur Edward Waite discusses a number of obscure Rites that possibly developed during the early eighteenth century in his *New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, Rites that have an element of mystery surrounding them, were in some cases there is some doubt as to when they were actually founded or when they ceased working. There were Rites such as the Order of the Palladium, which Waite mentions was founded in Paris in 1737,¹⁴ the Order of Amazons which allowed both sexes as members and was founded in South America in 1740¹⁵ and the Order of Xerophagists, which Waite states was founded in Italy in 1748.¹⁶ There was the Order of African Architects which Waite puts forward as '*exceedingly doubtful*' as being founded in 1756, but was probably founded later in 1765 and ended in 1806.¹⁷ The Rite of the Sublime Elects of Truth have a doubtful foundation date of 1776, the same year being given for the foundation of the Rite Ecossais Philosophique.¹⁸ Other obscure Rites include the Rite of the Black Eagle,¹⁹ the Persian Rite,²⁰ and the Order of Jerusalem.²¹

The Order of Jerusalem, according to Waite, was founded in North America in 1791, had eight degrees, was an association of alchemists and had a connection to the Rite of Chastanier, having spread to Germany, England, Holland and Russia, though Waite suggests that '*the whole story is doubtful*'.²² The Persian Rite is another Rite with an obscure history; Waite suggesting it may have been established at Erzurum in Turkey in 1818, but appeared in

¹² Aubrey J.B. Thomas, 'A Brief History of the Royal Arch in England', *AQC*, Vol. 85, (1972), pp.349-358. See also Robert T. Bashford, 'Aspects of the History of Freemasonry in Ireland', *AQC*, Vol. 129, (2016), in which Bashford discusses the early Royal Arch in Ireland and Dassigny's book.

¹³ See Belton, 'Brother Just One More Degree', *SRJ*, pp.7-9, in which Belton discusses the desire for extra degrees, a desire that dates back to the early history of Freemasonry in Britain.

¹⁴ Arthur Edward Waite, *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, Vol. 2, (New York: Wings Books, 1996), p.54.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.56.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.59.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.61 & p.75.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.67.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.345.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.275.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.72.

²² *Ibid.*

Paris a year later and worked seven degrees which contained three classes. The first class consisted of three degrees that in essence were similar to Craft Masonry; *Listening Apprentice*, *Fellow Craft Adept* and *Master*, the second class consisted of the fourth degree entitled *Architect of All Rites* and a fifth degree named *Knight of Eclecticism and Truth*, the third class concluded the Rite and included a sixth degree entitled *Master Good Shepherd* and a seventh and final degree called *Venerable Grand Elect*. However, Waite concludes that despite being able to name its degree system, there is no evidence that the Rite existed at all.²³

The Rite of Adonhiramite (sometimes referred to as Adoniramite) is another lesser known eighteenth century Rite that had twelve degrees, its creation being attributed by nineteenth century French Masonic author Jean Baptiste Marie Ragon to Baron de Tschoudy.²⁴ However, according to Masonic scholar and ritual specialist Arturo de Hoyos, the system is still worked in Brazil, so technically it is not lost.²⁵ The Rose Croix appears here as it does in many of these Rites, the Christian imagery and symbolism forming a mystical conclusion to a collection of rituals that are similar to other Rites that explore the Scottish Master degree, which is featured here as the tenth degree. There were a number of Rites that were less obscure and went on to influence other Rites and degrees, some evolving and inspiring later Orders, and it is these Rites that we shall examine next.

Jacobite and Templar Themes of the Early Rites

The eighteenth century was certainly a breeding ground for Masonic ritual as new ideas evolved and expanded to create many bizarre Rites. Indeed, during this fertile era of enlightenment, more and more exotic Rites began to be created at an exceptional rate, especially on the European Continent. One such early 'Rite' according to John Yarker writing in his *Arcane Schools* was called the *Vielle Bru*, or *Faithful Scots*, based at Toulouse, at Montpellier and at Marseilles, constituted by Sir Samuel Lockhart between 1743-1751. Yarker describes how the Rite '*drew on the legends of the old operative Guilds and did not proceed in its instruction beyond the 2nd temple.*' It was constructed of nine degrees, the last of which was curiously named *Menatzchim* or *Perfects*. A similar Rite soon emerged in Paris called the *Knights of the East* in 1751, and like the *Vielle Bru*, was said by Yarker to have explored similar Scottish and themes that perhaps reflected the interest in Jacobite ideas.²⁶

Another early 'Rite' was the Chapter of Clermont, which featured six degrees and was founded in France in 1754 by Chevalier de Bonneville.²⁷ Despite it only lasting for around four years, it was an early attempt at exploring *haut grades* that had a Templar theme.²⁸ The Chapter was said to have included the first three Craft degrees, the fourth being called *Maitre Ecossais* (*Scotch Master*), the fifth being *Maitre Eleu* (*Master Elect or Knight of the Eagle*), the sixth degree *Maitre Illustre* (*Illustrious Master or Knight of the Holy Sepulchre*), and the seventh and final degree being named *Maitre Sublime* (*Sublime Master and Knight of God*). Yarker

²³ Ibid., pp.275-6.

²⁴ Jean Baptiste Marie Ragon (1781-1862), was a French Mason, a member of the Royal Order of Scotland, and a prolific author at the time on esoteric Masonic Rites and ritual. His work *Masonerie ocultă și inițiere hermetică* being a notable publication in 1853. For more information on Ragon see John Songhurst, 'Ragon', *AQC*, Vol. 18, (1905), pp.97-103.

²⁵ See Arturo de Hoyos and Brent Morris, (Trans. & Eds.), *The Most Secret Mysteries of the High Degrees of Masonry Unveiled*, (Washington, DC: SRRS, 2011).

²⁶ Yarker, *Arcane Schools*, p.474.

²⁷ See Arturo de Hoyos, 'A 'Cocktail' from the Schröder Ritualsammlung: The Clermont System plus Additional Degrees', *Collectanea*, Vol. 16, Part 2, (Privately Printed by GCR of the USA: 1997).

²⁸ Yarker, *Arcane Schools*, p.474.

comments on how the higher degrees of the Chapter conveyed ‘*Solomon’s revenge*’ on the murderers of Hiram, the jewel of the *Maitre Illustre* grade being a dagger stuck into a skull.²⁹ There was indeed a strong desire to extend the themes explored in the Craft rituals, and there were plenty of charismatic characters that were eager to create or promote new Orders and Grades based on the continuation of the themes for the search for lost knowledge.

Baron von Hund and the Rite of Strict Observance

One such charismatic individual was Baron Karl Gotthelf von Hund, who in around 1754, founded the Rite of Strict Observance in Germany.³⁰ Baron von Hund had put forward that he had been initiated into a mysterious Masonic Order of the Temple in Paris in 1742 and that his secret knowledge had been gained from ‘*unknown superiors*’.³¹ The Rite of Strict Observance became a rather popular Rite, spreading to many other European countries such as Switzerland, Holland, Denmark and Russia, and included a tantalising seven degrees, offering the philosophy of progression to willing Masons who desired more.³²

These seven degrees, according to the transcription of the Schröder rituals³³ by Alain Bernheim and Arturo de Hoyos, included the first Craft degrees of *Apprentice*, *Fellow* and *Master Mason*, followed by *Scots Master*, *Secular Novice*, *Knight*, and finally *Lay Brother*.³⁴ The three Craft rituals are recognisable to any Mason, but nonetheless have stark differences, such as in the Master Mason degree which features a ‘*Cassia branch*’ instead of the Acacia sprig we know of today.³⁵ A collection of Catechisms are presented that seem quite unusual in certain contexts, and it appears that the rituals evolved down a very different path, though still retained the essence of the first three degrees. The Rite was Templar orientated, its chivalric content and the mystery that surrounds its supposed Jacobite origin still divides Masonic historians today. The translations by Bernheim and de Hoyos in discussing the ‘*Extracts From the History of the Order*’ present a story of how a number of Templars fled persecution in France in 1311 and arrived in Scotland, clothed as Masons. According to the story, once in Scotland, the Order continued with the ‘*usages of Masonry...chosen to preserve the memory...*’ and that ‘*nobody was admitted a Scots Master, other than a child of the Order...*’³⁶ The Rite in celebrating Scotland and its secret Templar heritage, seems to echo the chivalric ideas presented in the ‘*Oration*’ of Chevalier Ramsey, something that was also mirrored in von Hund’s suggestion of a mysterious Jacobite source for the system.³⁷

Indeed, Baron von Hund’s undoing was the mysterious origins of the Rite, and being unable to present any tangible proof of his ‘*unknown superiors*’, a result of which his story became untenable and his reputation damaged. He died in 1776 in much reduced circumstances. At the convent of Wilhelmsbad in 1782, von Hund’s Rite quickly unravelled as

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.475.

³⁰ See Alain Bernheim and Arturo de Hoyos, ‘Introduction to the Rituals of the Rite of Strict Observance’, *Heredom*, Vol. 14, (2006), pp.47-104. Here, Bernheim and de Hoyos discuss the historical development of the Rite and present a translation of the first three degrees.

³¹ Waite, *New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, Vol. 2, pp.352-3.

³² *Ibid.*, pp.64-6.

³³ Friedrich Ludwig Schröder (1744-1816) was a German actor and a prominent Freemason of the period.

³⁴ Alain Bernheim and Arturo de Hoyos, (ed.), ‘The Rite of Strict Observance’, *Collectanea*, Vol. 21, (Privately Printed by GCR of the USA: 2010), pp.1-106.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.37.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.85-6.

³⁷ For a discussion on the chivalric and Jacobite themes examined here see J. Webb, ‘The Scottish Rectified Rite’, *AQC*, Vol 100, (1988), pp.1-4.

a collection of delegates renounced the unproven Templar origins, they discarded the myth and a complete re-working of the ritual took place, ending the practice of von Hund's Rite of Strict Observance. Some Masonic writers, such as Waite, have made reference of the supposed Jacobite origins of von Hund's Rite; in Paris, von Hund believed he came into contact with a certain Knight of the Red Feather, whose identity was never revealed, but von Hund believed was none other than the Young Pretender Charles Edward Stuart. Waite was of the opinion that von Hund was mistaken or deceived, but either way, the Baron maintained his story until his death and the Rite of Strict Observance was, for a short while, one of the most progressive Rites in Europe during the eighteenth century.³⁸ Despite the end of the practice of von Hund's Rite of Strict Observance, its restructuring by Jean-Baptiste Willermoz led to the birth of the Rectified Scottish Rite, which will be discussed in more depth later. The Rite of Strict Observance also became an influence on the formation of the Rite of the Philalethes,³⁹ and the Swedish Rite, which is still worked in Sweden today.

The Rite of Philalethes

The Rite of Philalethes, as Waite most philosophically puts it, was '*among the several claimants to a general reformation of Masonry*'.⁴⁰ It was founded in 1773 by, amongst others, the prominent French Mason Charles Pierre-Paul Savalette de Langes, and was a rather eclectic mixture of grades, being influenced by the Rite of Strict Observance and the Rite de Elus Coens (Rite of the Elect Priesthood). It gained a distinguished membership and was central in organising the famed Convention of Paris in 1784, which fervently discussed '*the true nature of Masonic science*'. Despite having an illustrious membership and being quite progressive in nature, the Rite seems to have collapsed after the death of Savalette de Langes in 1797, and was thus relatively short lived. Its twelve grades included the three Craft degrees of *Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft* and *Master Mason*, followed by *Elect, Scottish Master, Knight of the East, Rose Croix, Knight of the Temple, Unknown Philosopher, Sublime Philosopher, Initiate*, and finally *Philalethes*.⁴¹ The development of this High-Grade style of Freemasonry became entwined with the egos of mystics, charismatic gentlemen and the fashions of Freemasonry on the Continent, not to mention the politics of the day, and it seems that each Rite that was established was presenting what they believed was the correct form of Masonry.

Martines de Pasqually and the Rite de Elus Coens

Martines de Pasqually established his Rite de Elus Coens (or the Rite of the Elect Priesthood) at Toulouse in 1760. Though there is some confusion over the exact structure of the grades, according to Waite the Rite reportedly had a possible nine degrees divided into three divisions; these included the Porch, which were basically the three Craft degrees that included *Apprentice, Companion* and *Particular Master*; the Temple, which consisted of 'Priestly' degrees that included *Grand Elect Master, Apprentice Priest, Companion Priest*; and the Shrine, which became more magical, with *Master Priest, Grand Master Architect*, and, according to J.M.

³⁸ Waite, *New Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, p.353.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.355.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.351.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Ragon the final grade was *Knight Commander*, which Papus later identified as a Rose Croix degree.⁴²

John Yarker in his *Arcane Schools* mentions a curious charter or patent that was issued by none other than Charles Stuart on the 20th of May, 1738, which gave the father of Martines de Pasqually permission to create lodges for the Rite de Elus Coens. There are obvious difficulties with a document such as this; Yarker mentions that Charles Stuart – the Bonnie Prince Charlie of history – is described in the document as King of Scotland, Ireland and England, and Grand Master of All Lodges on the face of the earth.⁴³ At the time the document was supposedly written, the Bonnie Prince was only 17 and it was his father - the old pretender James ‘III’ - who claimed the three crowns at this point. However, it is not the authenticity of the document that is important here, it is the power that such a document gives the Elus Coen groups that exist today.⁴⁴ The charter undoubtedly reminds one of Baron von Hund’s ‘*unknown superiors*’ and how the Bonnie Prince was associated with the Knight of the Red Feather. There was certainly a fashion for Masonic charters in the name of the Bonnie Prince during this time; Yarker also refers to a certain Lord de Berkley who, on the 14th February 1747, granted a charter for the Rose Croix to the Lodge ‘Jacobite Scots’ at Arras in France, Yarker indicating that there is no authenticated copy of the charter and Prince Charles Edward is sometimes referred to on the document as either ‘*King Pretendant*’ or ‘*substitute G.M.*’, depending on who was writing about it.⁴⁵ Interestingly, Yarker also commented on how women were not refused admission to the Rite de Elus Coens, which also reminds us of how both men and women could be part of Cagliostro’s Egyptian Rite.

Pasqually merged esoteric doctrines based on Gnosticism and the Kabbala, in short, his version of Freemasonry blended with magic to form a unique type of Rite. In this sense, the teachings of the Rite de Elus Coens enabled selected members to learn an aspect of magic that aimed to place the adept in communion with supernatural beings. Pasqually was particularly influential on Jean-Baptist Willermoz and Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, both taking his teachings in different directions. In 1772, Pasqually left France for the Caribbean to collect an inheritance and died there in 1774. The Order disintegrated after his death, and elements of the Rite were absorbed into the restructured Rite of Strict Observance by Willermoz, creating the Rectified Scottish Rite. Saint-Martin took his teachings in another direction, teachings that later went on to influence Martinism.

The Swedenborgian Rite

Emanuel Swedenborg has never been proven to be a Freemason, he was however a mystic, theologian, philosopher, scientist and inventor, whose teachings and work ultimately inspired the Swedenborg Rite. Emanuel Swedenborg was born in Stockholm in 1688, his father being a Professor of theology at Uppsala University and later Bishop of Skara. Swedenborg was a learned man; inventing flying machines, researching anatomy and undertaking many different studies into various aspects of learning, being a propagator in the search for the hidden mysteries of nature and science. It was later in life that Swedenborg had a spiritual awakening of sorts which witnessed a transition from a man of science to a mystic; a man who could talk

⁴² Arthur Edward Waite, *Saint-Martin the French Mystic and the Story of Modern Martinism*, (London: William Rider & Son, 1922), p.27.

⁴³ Yarker, *Arcane Schools*, p.470.

⁴⁴ A photograph of a copy of this charter can be seen in the book.

⁴⁵ Yarker, *Arcane Schools*, p.477.

to angels, spirits and demons, and who claimed to have received a new revelation from Jesus Christ, his teachings revealing the second coming of Christ and the last judgment. Swedenborg died in London in 1772, and he went on to inspire eminent artists and writers such as William Blake and Thomas De Quincey,⁴⁶ as well as men of mysticism such as Louis Claude de Saint-Martin. The Swedenborgian Church, which was inspired by the writings of Swedenborg, was founded in England in 1787, the New Church movement as it was also known, growing quickly, the Church still surviving today. It was after his death that the 'Swedenborgian' Rite was developed by a Polish Count and Swedenborg enthusiast called Thaddeus Leszczy Grabianka and a certain Dom Antoine Joseph Pernety, fusing Swedenborg's mystical teachings with Masonic ideas.⁴⁷

Dom Antoine Joseph Pernety had left the Benedictine Order and, after settling in Avignon, pursued his interests in alchemy. He then relocated to Berlin, becoming librarian to the Freemason Frederick the Great, and while there, he translated Swedenborg's works into French. It was in Berlin that Pernety met the Polish Count Thaddeus Leszczy Grabianka, and after Pernety returned to Avignon, Grabianka joined him and together they founded the *Société des Illuminés d'Avignon* in 1786. This early 'Swedenborgian' Rite was relatively short lived, coming to an end in the wake of the chaos brought by the French Revolution. They did however attract two English Swedenborgians of note; William Bryan and John Wright, who, in 1789 'were initiated into the mysteries of their order' and were introduced to 'the actual and personal presence of the Lord', who was conveyed by a 'majestic young man...in purple garments, seated on a throne', situated in an inner chamber 'decorated with heavenly emblems'.⁴⁸ This hints that the Rite reflected the Millennialism philosophies of Swedenborg, but what the rest of the ritual was like, we can only speculate. Another Swedenborgian Rite surfaced with the occult revival of the later nineteenth century, again containing elements of Swedenborg's mystical Millennialism.⁴⁹

The obscurity of the early version of the Rite has led to a number of different presentations of its history and it has been said that the aforementioned *Société des Illuminés d'Avignon* had no connection at all to the later Swedenborgian Rite that developed in the USA, the later Rite 'containing too much of American Craft Ritual'.⁵⁰ In an edition of *Collectanea* that discusses the Rite, a reference traces it to London c.1784 where a certain Benedict Chastanier is mentioned regarding an Order based on the *Illuminated Theosophists*, which had been founded by him in 1767.⁵¹ The edition then describes how the Rite was revived in America in 1859 by members of the Swedenborgian New Church, and though this foundation date is suggested as being problematic, the Rite was certainly in existence there in 1869 when a book was written about the Order by Samuel Beswick. Freemason and occultist John Yarker was also involved in the revived Rite, being listed as Supreme Grand Master.⁵² Six Grades are presented as being worked by the revived Rite; the first three being the Craft degrees, the fourth was titled *Enlightened Phremason*, the fifth *Sublime Phremason*, and the sixth and final Grade

⁴⁶ David Harrison, 'Thomas De Quincey: The Opium Eater and the Masonic Text', *AQC*, Vol. 129, (2016), pp.276-281.

⁴⁷ R.A. Gilbert, 'Chaos out of Order: The Rise and Fall of the Swedenborgian Rite', *AQC*, Vol. 108, (1996), pp.122-149. See also Hamill and Gilbert, *World Freemasonry An Illustrated History*, p.69.

⁴⁸ Gilbert, 'Chaos out of Order: The Rise and Fall of the Swedenborgian Rite', *AQC*, p.123.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Arturo de Hoyas, (ed.), 'The Swedenborgian Rite', *Collectanea*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (Privately Printed by GCR of the USA: 1962), p.18.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.19.

Perfect Phremason.⁵³ In the final Grade, God's name is revealed and the Masonic journey is declared as complete.⁵⁴

Yarker does touch on the Swedenborgian Rite in his *Arcane Schools*, stating that 'it consists of three elaborate and beautiful ceremonies for which the Craft is required.'⁵⁵ Although it has been affirmed that it has nothing to do with the earlier and more mysterious *Société des Illuminés d'Avignon*, the nineteenth century Swedenborgian Rite is an example of the difficulties that arise in assessing if a particular Rite was actually revived or not. Without certain continuity and complete evidence of the rituals that were used, a revival or indeed, a claimed continuation of a particular Rite will always be debatable.

The Rite of Zinnendorf

This particular Rite was named after Johann Wilhelm Ellenberger von Zinnendorf, born in Halle in 1731. Zinnendorf was a prominent figure in Freemasonry, and in 1773 he struck a deal with the Grand Lodge of England that all lodges in Germany, with the exception of the Provincial Grand Lodge at Frankfurt, would be placed under his charge, Zinnendorf effectively becoming Grand Master, a position he held until his death in 1782. The Rite itself, according to Waite, had been said to be a concoction of the 'visions of Swedenborg' and the 'vestiges of Pernety's Hermetic Illuminism', though he mentions there was no evidence of this. Indeed, the arrangement of the Rite reflects a certain influence from the Rite of Strict Observance; the first part was made up of the Craft or Blue Masonry with the *Apprentice* degree, followed by *Companion*, then *Master*. The second part was what Waite termed as Red Masonry, with *Écossais Apprentice and Companion*, followed by *Master Écossais*, then the third and final part was entitled Capitular Masonry, with a grade called *Favourite of St. John*, followed by *Chapter of Elect Masons*.⁵⁶

Zinnendorf's Rite with its *Écossais* (Scottish) aspirations thus appears to have an influence from the Rite of Strict Observance. Zinnendorf had indeed been a member of the Strict Observance; he had been 'knighted' by von Hund in 1764, Zinnendorf becoming Master of the Three Globes Lodge in Berlin the following year. Von Hund constituted the Three Globes as a 'Scots or Directoral Lodge' in 1766, giving it the power to warrant Strict Observance lodges. However, the harmony was broken when in the November, Zinnendorf 'formally notified to Von Hund of his renunciation of the Strict Observance', and in May 1767 he resigned from the Three Globes. This gave Zinnendorf the freedom to create his own Rite and to forge his ambitions that ultimately led to his negotiations with the Grand Lodge of England.⁵⁷ The Rite has a marked similarity to the Swedish Rite, with some minor but equally significant variations.

Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite

Of all the Masonic Rites that existed on the Continent during the eighteenth century, Count Alessandro Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite is perhaps one of the most intriguing and fascinating Rite. Cagliostro himself was a man of mystery, of ego and of creativity; the exotic theatre of Freemasonry being the backdrop to portray his own unique blend of alchemy, sex and magic,

⁵³ Ibid., p.23.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.104.

⁵⁵ Yarker, *Arcane Schools*, p.490.

⁵⁶ Waite, *New Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, p.363.

⁵⁷ R.F. Gould, *History of Freemasonry*, Vol. III, (Edinburgh: T.C. Jack, 1887), p.244.

a concoction that certainly appealed to the Parisian social elite of the time. Cagliostro became the romantic subject of writers such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Alexandre Dumas,⁵⁸ and the romance surrounding his life seems to blur between fantasy and reality, creating an almost mythical Masonic character. For example, Cagliostro allegedly met illustrious eighteenth century personalities such as the Comte de Saint-Germain and Casanova, and Cagliostro's past was as mysterious as these two figures, the enigmatic magician being identified as Giuseppe Balsamo, an Italian forger and trickster, in a French newspaper published in London called *Courrier de l'Europe* in September 1786. He was again identified as Balsamo in a publication in 1791 by the Apostolic Chamber in Rome, outlining Cagliostro's trial, entitled *Vie de Joseph Balsamo*.⁵⁹ Trouble did seem to accompany Cagliostro wherever he went; while in France in the 1780s, Cagliostro had been implicated in the Affair of the Diamond necklace, which directly involved Marie Antoinette in a tangled web of dark intrigue, and after spending time in the Bastille, he was released and left for England, later leaving for Rome, where he was arrested for being a Freemason in 1789. After trying to escape from the Castel Saint'Angelo, Cagliostro was moved to the Fortress of San Leo, where he died soon after.

Cagliostro became such an important figure in Freemasonry at the time that he was invited to the Convention of Paris in 1784 to explain his system, a Convention that the Rite of the Philalethes had been instrumental in organising. His claims included that he could renew youth, he could conjure the apparitions of the dead, he could bestow beauty on those who submitted to his system of Hermetic medicine, and that he could make gold. In short, his Rite would reveal the true hidden mysteries of nature and science, and as it became open to women, he began to attract a number of high-ranking ladies.⁶⁰ The Rite itself consisted of three Craft-like degrees; that of *Apprentice*, *Companion* and *Master*, but these degrees consisted of some very interesting material. John Yarker in his *Arcane Schools*, believed that Cagliostro's ritual may have been influenced by Pasqually,⁶¹ and the two Rites did indeed share deeper magical aspects, as we shall explore in later chapters. Cagliostro continues to attract the interest of writers, perhaps due to the flamboyant nature of his life and his more magical style of Freemasonry.

The Melissino Rite

Pyotr Ivanovich Melissino (1726-1797) was a General of the Artillery of the Russian Empire of Greek origin, and was the founder of the Melissino Rite, which was active in St Petersburg in Russia in 1765. Melissino was a prominent member of St Petersburg society, which was also a fashionable and cultural centre for the Enlightenment under Catherine the Great, Melissino becoming acquainted with the likes of Casanova, a man of high social standing who was also linked to Freemasonry.⁶² Melissino's Rite comprised of seven degrees, and as Melissino was

⁵⁸ See Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey*, (1816-17) and Alexandre Dumas, *Mémoires D'Un Medecin. Joseph Balsamo*, (1846), both of which refer to Cagliostro.

⁵⁹ Evans, *Cagliostro and his Egyptian Rite*, pp.5-6, though Evans seems to doubt Cagliostro was Balsamo. Faulks and Cooper also reject this theory but shine little light on his mysterious origins, see Philippa Faulks and Robert L.D. Cooper, *The Masonic Magician: The Life and Death of Count Cagliostro and his Egyptian Rite*, (London: Watkins, 2008), p.1 and p.15.

⁶⁰ Waite, *New Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 1, pp.89-99.

⁶¹ Yarker, *Arcane Schools*, p.471.

⁶² See Robert Collis, 'Illuminism in the Age of Minerva: Pyotr Ivanovich Melissino (1726-1796) and High-Degree Freemasonry in Catherine the Great's Russia, 1762-1782', *Collegium, Studies Across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 16, (Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies), pp.128-168.

deeply interested in alchemy, alchemical, Rosicrucian and Kabbalistic references seeped into the Rite, making this form of Freemasonry very attractive to the social elite of the time.⁶³ Melissino was also said to have been one of the ‘*most faithful followers*’ of Cagliostro, and as we shall see in a later chapter, there are similarities in certain parts of the rituals.⁶⁴

The seven degrees of the Rite included the first three Craft degrees of *Entered Apprentice*, *Fellow-Craft* and *Master Mason*, then continued the Hiram legend with a fourth degree called the *Dark Vault*, with a narrative of the search for the grave of Hiram and how nine Master Masons were selected for the search. The fifth degree of *Scottish Master* is reminiscent of the Scots Master degree of the Rite of Strict Observance, the degree being Chivalric in nature, putting forward how a group of Master Masons carried away the body of Hiram and the treasure of the Temple to Scotland where they founded a number of lodges. This Scottish-Templar legend can also be found in Cagliostro’s Egyptian Rite, where in the first degree it puts forward that ‘*one of the Templars, who took refuge in Scotland, follow the Freemasons to the number of 13, afterward 33...*’⁶⁵

The sixth degree of *Philosopher* focusses on examining the initiate if he is ‘*sufficiently instructed in secrets of the Chamber of Wisdom*’ and if so, he can move forward to discover the ‘*hieroglyphs*’, the initiate being reborn and qualified to assist the aim of Freemasonry in restoring the Golden Age.⁶⁶ The final seventh degree of the *Grand Priest of the Temple* or *Spiritual Knight* is a dramatic conclusion to the Rite; the degree being filled with references of alchemy that put forward that the initiate is finally attaining the secrets of the old philosophers; the secrets of divine magic handed down from ‘*three pupils of Pythagoras and Zeno...*’⁶⁷ This final degree has been described as historian Robert Collis as the most profound expression of Illuminism,⁶⁸ and does indeed present a concluding spectacle that presents the candidate with the lost knowledge of the ancients. In 1782, Secret Societies became forbidden in Russia, and although Freemasonry was not affected, Melissino appears to have retired and withdrew himself from the Order, his lodges eventually closing.

The Rite of the African Builders or Architects

This Rite has obscure beginnings according to Waite; it may have been founded around 1766 and there is certainly some mystery surrounding its organisation. J.W.B. von Hymmen has been mentioned by Waite as being associated to the Rite of the African Builders or Architects, along with C.F. Köppen, who was the founder. Like the Rite of Strict Observance, the rituals were performed in Latin, and Hymmen, who was a Prussian Judge, was said by Waite to have been a member of the Strict Observance. There is some debate as to the Masonic nature of its degrees, although Waite presumes that a member had to be a Master Mason before joining. There are two different accounts presented by Waite of the actual degrees they practiced; the first of which includes the Inferior Grades of *Apprentice of Egyptian Secrets*, *Initiation into Egyptian Secrets*, *Cosmopolitan or Citizen of the World*, *Christian Philosopher*, *Alethophiles or Lover of Truth*, and High Grades of *Esquire*, *Soldier* and finally *Knight*. The second account gives the degrees as *Knight* or *Apprentice*, *Brother* or *Companion*, *Soldier* or *Master*,

⁶³ Ibid., pp.143-4. See also de Hoyos, (ed.), ‘The Melissino System of Freemasonry’, pp.3-4.

⁶⁴ de Hoyos, (ed.), ‘The Melissino System of Freemasonry’, *Collectanea*, p.4.

⁶⁵ Evans, *Cagliostro and his Egyptian Rite*, p.24.

⁶⁶ Collis, ‘Illuminism in the Age of Minerva’, *Collegium*, p.143.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.147.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.142.

*Horseman or Knight, Novice, Aedile or Builder, and finally Tribunus or Knight of the Eternal Silence.*⁶⁹

Looking at the first account of the degree system, the Rite seemed to concentrate on Egyptian secrets and mysteries, giving an interesting fashionable and exotic flavour to the grades, reminding one of Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite. It certainly attracted the literati of the time and was established for the purpose of '*literary culture and intellectual studies*', being an Order that appealed to the intelligentsia, and for a short time 'lodges' were operating in Worms, Cologne and Paris. However, the Rite was short lived, and according to Gould writing in his *History of Freemasonry*, the Rite died with the death of Köppen in 1797.⁷⁰ Despite its relatively short life, the Rite has certainly attracted the attention of Masonic writers such as Gould and Waite, who seemed to find it an intriguing example of a lost Rite.

Rite of Egyptian Priests

Egyptian styled Freemasonry certainly flourished during the later eighteenth century, with the aforementioned Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite and the Rite of African Builders. However there is another example with the rather obscure Rite of Egyptian Priests, which is yet another Rite that explores an esoteric form of initiation with an arcane Egyptian backdrop. Nick Farrell presents a translation of this para-Masonic Rite of the Egyptian Priests, derived from a German work entitled *Crata Repoa* dated from 1770, a translation having previously been conducted by Ragon in the nineteenth century.⁷¹ The Rite contained seven Grades; the first being *of the Pastophoris or Apprentice*, the second *Neocoris*, the third grade is *The Door of Death*, the fourth is *The Battle with Shadows*, the fifth *Balahate*, the sixth is entitled *Astronomus before the Gateway of the Gods*, and the seventh and ultimate grade is *Propheta or rather Saphenath Pancah, he who knows secrets*. The seven grades from apprentice to '*Propheta*' reflect other Rites of the period such as the Rite of Philalethes that provide the journey from a novice to becoming a prophet who finally has the lost knowledge of the ancients revealed to him.⁷²

With an obvious Egyptian theme running through the Rite, an Egyptian setting dominates the performance of the grades; the Sphinx and mummies are mentioned, and in the grade of *The Door of Death*, a room is revealed with '*various sorts of embalmed bodies and coffins*.'⁷³ The death of Egyptian and Greek Gods such as Typhon, who is killed in the fifth grade by Orus (Horus), are also portrayed as the candidate progresses on his journey.⁷⁴ The Rite is indeed a rather mysterious one, and as Farrell writes in the introduction of the work '*Historically its claims are bogus or unlikely but have been upheld by groups that used it as a template including the European Esoteric Freemasonic Groups*' and that the Rite is a '*small, and largely forgotten work*' which '*was influential on the development of the Western Mystery Tradition. These in turn influenced the English speaking Rosicrucian Orders including the Golden Dawn, OTO, AMORC, Builders of the Adytum and Dion Fortune*.'⁷⁵ Thus, according to Farrell, this relatively small and forgotten Rite becomes significant when looking at how the

⁶⁹ Waite, *New Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 1, pp.9-12.

⁷⁰ R.F. Gould, *History of Freemasonry*, Vol. III, (Edinburgh: T.C. Jack, 1887), p.244.

⁷¹ Songhurst, 'Ragon', *AQC*, p.103. A translation of *Crata Repoa* by a US Mason in the early nineteenth century was also presented by Arturo de Hoyos and S. Brent Morris in their work *Committed to the Flames*, (Hersham: Lewis Masonic, 2008).

⁷² See Nick Farrell, *Crata Repoa*, (Rome, 2009).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.5.

occult revival of the later nineteenth century developed and how the revival was influenced by the earlier esoteric Rites of the eighteenth century.

The Bavarian Illuminati

Another Society that certainly attracts attention today is the Illuminati; a Society which was originally non-Masonic and was founded in Germany in 1776 by Adam Weishaupt. Weishaupt, a professor of canon law at Ingolstadt University, had originally devised the concept of a secret society filled with his most enlightened students. With the Owl of Minerva perched on an open book as their symbol, the Illuminati, which was designed to support the ideas of the Enlightenment, eventually worked a number of grades that expanded on Weishaupt's ideas. The idea behind the name 'Illuminati' echoed the members' fight against darkness, but originally Weishaupt was going to call the Society the 'Bee Order', and its members were called Perfectibilists; the Order striving for the improvement of human nature and society. Weishaupt joined a lodge under the Rite of Strict Observance in 1777, and after being introduced to the first three degrees of Freemasonry, decided to form his own lodge of Illuminati members, thus merging the two.

The recent work on the Bavarian Illuminati *The Secret School of Wisdom* provides an excellent presentation of the formation of the degrees and how Masonic elements were added to the Illuminati system. This was done with the help of Baron Adolph von Knigge, who had become disenchanted with the Strict Observance and its elusive unknown superiors, and embraced the Illuminati wholeheartedly. Some of Knigge's ideas included a Table Lodge, and an overall Christian flavour that culminated with an idea that Hiram was actually Jesus, Freemasonry being a way of propagating his secret teachings. Knigge was also aware of the aforementioned Rite of Egyptian Priests through the exposé *Crata Repoa*, the fourth degree of which is called *The Battle of the Shadows*. This degree certainly resounds in the Minerva degree of the Illuminati, especially with the occurrence of the adept in *The Battle of the Shadows* being given a shield called 'Minerva' and then awarded a medal which reveals Minerva as an owl.⁷⁶

The grades according to Waite, became a mixture of the political, the intellectual and the Masonic, with Waite putting forward a number of parts to their system; Part A included the Preparatory degrees of *Novice and Teacher*, *Academy of Illuminism* or *Minerva degree*, followed by *Illuminatus Minor* and the final degree of *Illuminatus Major* or *Magistrate of the Minerval Church*. Part B followed with the Intermediary degree of *Scottish Knight of Illuminism*, which appears to have been inspired by the popular fashion for the *Écossais Grades*. The progression continued with Part C, which Waite termed the Class of the Lesser Mysteries and included *Epopot* or *Priest of Illuminism*, and this priestly degree was followed by *Regent* or *Principatus Illuminatus*, which Waite refers to as a more political degree. Part D is given as the final stage and was titled Class of the Greater Mysteries, which included *Magus* or *Philosopher* and finally *Man-King*. The system certainly reflected the journey from 'Novice' to 'Philosopher' that so many other of the Rites conducted. The degrees may have been different, but they shared similar themes. The Illuminati of Bavaria was finally suppressed by an electoral edict in 1784, and Weishaupt's vision of human perfectibility came to an end.⁷⁷ The name of the Illuminati is perhaps more widely known today for being embraced by

⁷⁶ See Josef Wages, Reinhard Markner and Jeva Singh-Anand, *The Secret School of Wisdom; The Authentic Rituals and Doctrines of the Illuminati*, (Hersham: Lewis Masonic, 2015), pp.13-40. See also Farrell, *Crata Repoa*, pp.12-13.

⁷⁷ Waite, *New Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 1, pp.386-8.

speculative authors and conspiracy theorists as an umbrella term for a wide range of collective secret societies, but the true history of the Order is far more interesting and appealing, especially as the original ethos of the society was to bring light in the form of maintaining the ideas of the Enlightenment. There are various groups existing today that work the grades of the Bavarian Illuminati, though these are more recent revivals and have no continuity with Weishaupt's original Society.

Fessler's Rectified Rite

With so many Rites being practiced during the eighteenth century, there were attempts to reform them, to retain certain elements that appealed and discard the parts that did not. Fessler's Rectified Rite was an attempt to reform the various Masonic degrees of the period, but unlike Willermoz's Rectified Scottish Rite, Fessler's Rite was a little less successful to say the least. Ignaz Aurelius Fessler was Hungarian who took Holy Orders, becoming a novice in a monastery at the age of seventeen in 1773. He became disaffected with monastic life and in 1783, he became a Mason at Lemberg, and soon developed a desire to reform Freemasonry. Fessler was a member of the Lodge Royal York of Friendship, eventually forming a new constitution and establishing it as a Grand Lodge in 1798, also extending an educational aspect to the project by creating a Scientific Masonic Union that was dedicated to historical study of Masonic science.

The Rite itself was adapted from numerous sources such as the French Rite, the Strict Observance, the Chapter of Clermont, the Swedish Rite and the Ordo Roseæ et Aureæ Crucis, Fessler seemingly putting together a balance of the Masonic, esoteric and chivalric grades. Waite thus puts forward Fessler's degree system; the first three Craft degrees followed by a Chapter of Higher Knowledge which included *the Holy of Holies*, *Justification*, *the Celebration*, *the True Light*, *the Fatherland*, and finally *Perfection*. The Rite was abandoned in 1800, and Fessler himself 'resigned all honours and offices' two years later, though according to Clavel's *Histoire Pittoresque de la Franc-Maçonnerie* some Prussian lodges were practicing the Rite around 1840.⁷⁸

The Rite of Perfection and the Order of the Royal Secret

We now know that the Rite of Perfection consisted of the first part of 14 degrees while the 25 degrees of the Rite (including the first three Blue Lodge degrees) were collectively known as the Order of the Royal Secret.⁷⁹ The system appears to have been compiled by French trader Estienne Morin. Morin had been involved in High Grade Freemasonry since the 1740s, his trade to the West Indies allowing him to establish the Order in Jamaica and North America. Morin was helped by Henry Andrew Francken, another French national of Dutch extraction who Morin made Deputy Grand Inspector General. It was Francken that travelled to New York and established the Rite there in 1767, and from there, the Order went on to be founded in South Carolina, which ultimately led to the establishment of the Scottish Rite there in 1801, the Scottish Rite becoming one of the most well-known and enduring Rites that it still widely practiced today. Francken worked with Morin on the Rite and wrote a number of manuscripts

⁷⁸ Waite, *New Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, pp.271-6.

⁷⁹ See de Hoyos, 'Masonic Rites and Systems', *Handbook of Freemasonry*, pp.367-8. See also Arturo de Hoyos, 'Anti-Masonic Abuse of Scottish Rite Literature', in Arturo de Hoyos (ed.), and S. Brent Morris (ed.), *Freemasonry in Context: History, Ritual, Controversy*, (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2004), pp.259-272, on p.260.

which gave details of the grades, what is referred to as the third of these manuscripts eventually fell into the hands of a certain Michael Alexander Gage in the north-west of England.

Michael Alexander Gage and the Francken Manuscript

Michael Alexander Gage was one of the presiding architects of the Liverpool Masonic Rebellion of 1823, the rebellion effectively relaunching the Antient Grand Lodge. The rebellion was a reaction against the ritual and administrative changes ushered in by the union of 1813, a union that had brought the Moderns and the Antients together. The issue of the Royal Arch was of much contention, the Antients practicing the ritual as a separate degree, the Moderns officially recognising the Royal Arch as the completion of the third degree. Gage was born in Kings Lynn in Norfolk in 1788 and joined a lodge there, becoming Worshipful Master of the lodge in 1810. He then moved to Glasgow the following year, where he also joined a lodge, finally settling in Liverpool in 1812, where he became a prominent member of an Antient lodge named Lodge No. 20.⁸⁰ Gage was a firebrand of a man; his demands for regulation change and his ensuing letter to the Grand Master the Duke of Sussex revealed his strong passion for questioning the union, but Gage was also deeply interested in ritual, and was the owner of a rare copy of the Francken manuscript.

This Third Francken MS as it has become known, is indeed a remarkable document; Gage writes at the beginning of the document that it was '*Received from John Caird, Edinburgh - Jas. Caird, Liverpool 30th August 1815*', and it was still in his possession fifty years later.⁸¹ The manuscript gives a description of 25 degrees of the Order of the Royal Secret, the precursor to the Scottish Rite, and was certainly of interest to Gage, who kept the manuscript long after he left the rebel Grad Lodge. Gage's dream of a relaunch and expansion of the Antient Grand Lodge started to disintegrate only a few years after its conception, when internal disagreements were to see the Grand Lodge move permanently to Wigan and become more local in its outlook. This 'Wigan Grand Lodge' had a small number of lodges operating in the industrial north-west of England during the 1840s, with two lodges operating in Wigan, one in Warrington, one in Liverpool, a lodge in Ashton-in-Makerfield and a lodge in Ashton-under-Lyne, and like the Antients, they practiced the Royal Arch as a separate degree.⁸²

In his resignation letter to the Wigan Grand Lodge in 1842, Gage outlined that he had not attended a lodge for fifteen years, and he declined a request to write a pamphlet about the rebellion. It seemed that Gage had long been disenchanted by the route the rebels had taken, and was greatly concerned by the '*great irregularity in Numbering and granting of New Warrants*' for the lodges, being upset at not being given the opportunity to inspect the new Warrants before they were issued.⁸³ So had Gage wanted another direction for the Grand Lodge? And did this direction include the practice of the 25 degrees presented on the Francken Manuscript? The fact that he still had the document in 1865, long after he had resigned and even longer since he had attended a lodge, certainly reveals a deep interest in the Rite. However, we can only speculate on his ultimate grand design. We do know however that Freemasonry in the north of England had independent flourishes, such as with the York Grand Lodge, which operated at intermittent periods during the eighteenth century, and of course the aforementioned Liverpool Masonic Rebellion and the subsequent Wigan Grand Lodge.

⁸⁰ Harrison, *Liverpool Masonic Rebellion and the Wigan Grand Lodge*, pp.32-3.

⁸¹ J.M. Hamill, 'A Third Francken MS of The Rite of Perfection', *AQC*, Vol. 97, (1984), pp.200-2.

⁸² Harrison, *Liverpool Masonic Rebellion and the Wigan Grand Lodge*, pp.55-8 and pp.68-9.

⁸³ Eustace B. Beesley, *The History of The Wigan Grand Lodge*, (Manchester: MAMR, 1920), pp.83-6.

Conclusion

The majority of these Rites included a similar structure; they started with the three Craft degrees, then built on these by exploring the Scots or Scottish Master Grade, such as the Rite of Strict Observance, Rite of Philalethes and Melissino's Rite. The initiate then went on to sample Chivalric degrees until finally, like the Philalethes and Melissino Rites, a degree of Philosopher opened the way for the initiate to attain a full spiritual understanding with the discovery of the lost knowledge of the ancients. This High Grade style of Freemasonry was certainly popular on the Continent, especially in France and Germany, and besides offering a further pathway for the Freemason to explore the arcane secrets on offer, they were managed by charismatic and popular gentlemen such as von Hund, Melissino and Pasqually, which would also be an attraction to gentlemen searching for pathways to investigate. The additional appeal of having access to the teachings of alchemy, magic and the Kabbalah that were offered in certain Rites such as Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite and Melissino's Rite, provided an additional attractive aspect for one's search for the lost knowledge of the ancients, and attracted men (and women) to join and to socialise in the orbit of their particular charismatic leader.

Many of the men behind the lost Rites discussed here were clearly misunderstood; Count Cagliostro for example will forever remain an enigmatic and confusing historical figure, his mysterious past and dramatic demise creating deliberation amongst historians. Baron von Hund will also persistently attract debate whether or not he actually met the mysterious Unknown Superiors, if he was duped by con-artists or if he really met with the Knight of the Red Feather. Others such as Zinnendorf clearly had ambitions of their own and became leading figures in Freemasonry.

Despite the popularity and zeal of the High Grade Rites that sprang up during the eighteenth century on the Continent, there was a reaction in an effort to bring Freemasonry back to the significance of the Craft degrees. This reaction to what was seen as the pretentiousness of High Grade Freemasonry is best exemplified with the Grand Lodge of the Eclectic Union, which began around 1783, and according to Waite may well have still been meeting in Frankfort-on-the-Main and prior to 1914, Waite noted that there were 21 lodges under its sway with 3000 members. It seems not all Freemasons were too keen to explore new pathways.⁸⁴

Many of these Rites failed to survive after the death of their founder; Cagliostro's Rite disappeared after his death and the Rite of Strict Observance also ceased to function in its original form after the demise of von Hund. The Rite of Strict Observance however, was reformed and restructured by Willermoz, who also absorbed elements of the Rite de Elus Coens into the new structure, creating the Rectified Scottish Rite, otherwise known as Chevalier Bienfaisant de la Cité Sainte, a Rite that still exists today. This Rite evolved from the 1778 convent at Lyons and finally took shape after the 1782 convent of Wilhelmsbad, led by Willermoz himself, who combined the Templar themes of the Strict Observance with the religious themes of Elus Coens. Willermoz had been prominently involved in both Rites, and the Rectified Scottish Rite is certainly an example of a Rite that emerged from the blending of different Masonic ideas. Ideas do seem to have been shared, and certain parallels do exist between other Rites, especially when examining aspects of Cagliostro's and Melissino's ritual content. The Order of the Royal Secret transformed into the Scottish Rite in South Carolina

⁸⁴ Waite, *New Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 1, pp.207-8.

during the early nineteenth century, the Rite developing from 25 degrees to a total of 33 degrees, reminding us that some rites can evolve and transform.